

WARNER

More vintage feature films from the Warner archives for collectors to drool over, starting with 'The Edward G. Robinson Collection', which features *The Sea Wolf* (excellent 1941 thriller with Robinson playing a psychotic sea captain who locks horns with brash seaman John Garfield); *Bullets Or Ballots* (a tough 1936 gangster film with Robinson as an undercover cop infiltrating the mob); *The Woman In The Window* (brilliant Fritz Lang mystery with Robinson a professor who is lured into a web of deceit and murder when he meets a beautiful stranger. Edge of the seat stuff topped by a neat surprise twist); *Kid Galahad* (Robinson playing a punchy boxing promoter who makes Wayne Morris a star but loses his girlfriend to him in the process. A good solid drama); and *Little Caesar* (Robinson at his greatest, playing Rico, a small time Italian hood who becomes a big-shot. One of the finest gangster films ever made). If you prefer more up to date material, you might like to check out *Switching Channels*, which teams Burt Reynolds, Kathleen Turner and Christopher Reeve in an easy-going remake of *His Girl Friday* and *The Front Page*. Set in a satellite TV station run by Burt, it's less effective as a satire than previous entries, but the stars are great. The same can't be said of *Bright Lights Big City*, which plunges diminutive Michael J. Fox into Manhattan's fast lane as a down-on-his luck writer who is in danger of losing control of his life because of too many late-night parties and a destructive fondness for 'powdering his nose.' Kiefer Sutherland steals the show as Fox's immoral party-animal pal, but it's a pretty dreary affair otherwise. Finally, for the kids, Warner have a two part musical adaptation of the Lewis Carroll classic *Alice In Wonderland* which is packed with stars like Telly Savalas, Sammy Davis Jr, Anthony Newley and Red Buttons. It was far too American for our tastes, and far too long. *Rainbow Brite And The Star Stealer* is a feature length cartoon designed to sell lots of toys to penniless mums and dads, and *Follow That Bird* is a Sesame Street spin-off starring a big yellow bird. I'm getting too old for this job...

DARGAIN BASEMENT

WATCHWORD

A newcomer to the sell through field, Watchword Video have already established quite a reputation in the field of wildlife and conservation programming. This month they bring us three more very worthy titles that should appeal to anyone who takes an interest in 'green' issues. Birds first, and *Slimbridge - Sanctuary On The Severn* is a documentary shot over the course of a full year and looking at the world-famous Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the man who started it all, the late Sir Peter Scott. A real collector's item. Then there's *Bewitched By A Dolphin*, narrated by actress Angharad Rees. This is a unique and touching account of a young dolphin who appeared off the beautiful Pembrokeshire coastline, stayed a year, and then vanished - presumably in the direction of Hollywood to audition for the next series of *Flipper*! Lastly comes *The Stolen River*, with actor Joss Ackland narrating the sad story of the Savuti Channel in Northern Botswana, which mysteriously disappeared in 1982 and provoked extreme behaviour in the dependent wildlife as survival became their main priority. Fascinating and educational stuff, beautifully photographed.

WATERSHED

The most successful, long-running children's television programme comes to sell through at last with the release of *The Best Of Blue Peter*. Watershed's entertaining compilation is made up of extracts culled from the 1960s and 70s, including such memorable moments as Val Singleton meeting the Pope (and giving him a *Blue Peter* badge?) and John Noakes crashing in a bobsleigh at 90mph (sadly he survived). We also get to see Leslie Judd interviewing Otto Frank, father of famous diarist Anne, and no tribute to this enduring show would be complete without John, Val and Peter's hilarious encounter with Lulu the elephant, who made her mark on television history when she made her mark on the studio floor!

Patriotic soccer fans will no doubt want to take a look at *The Official History Of The England Football Team*, which contains exclusive behind-the-scenes footage of England's valiant efforts in this year's World Cup. This is one of the few World Cups we can be proud of, so we might as well celebrate it. Also shown in this 80 minute tape are scenes from England's other momentous matches over the past 80 years, complemented by unique interviews with Bobby Moore, Geoff Hurst, Bryan Robson, Billy Wright, Gary Lineker etc. Finally, Christmas is just around the corner again, and it wouldn't be the same without repeats of the Eric and Ernie show. This year you can supplement your usual yule diet with the first volume of Watershed's *Classic Morecombe And Wise*. This features 65 minutes of sketches plus an intro from the one with the short, fat, hairy legs. Two further volumes are planned for release shortly. And staying with the laughter theme Watershed also offer *Classic Dick Emery*, compiled from the late comic's BBC shows of the 70s and 80s. 'Ooooh, they are awful!'



POETRY in motion

Here's a Poe-ser for you, who's stories have inspired some of the best and plenty of the worst horror films around? Edgar Allan Poe's of course. With the long awaited *Two Evil Eyes*, soon to be with us we Poe-litely asked Poe faced Gavin Baddeley to take a look at what else is around. A task which kept him well, on the Poe!

The stories and poems of Edgar Allen Poe have been a source of inspiration for cartoons, paintings, comics and even rock albums, but if there is one place Poe has really left his mark it is in the world of films.

Born in 1809, Poe looked more like a bank clerk than a teller of gruesome tales. Indeed much of his work was comic, or romantic and he was a pioneer of the detective story. But it was Poe's bizarre and grotesque visions that really captured the reading public's imagination and have continued to do so since his tragic death in 1849. What inspired his macabre classics is impossible to say; he was a deeply sensitive, very peculiar individual whose life was dogged by tragedy and his increasing addiction to alcohol. When his genius was finally recognised in America he was invited for an audience at the White House but he arrived in such a drunken and disheveled state that he was thrown out (funny but they say the same happened to Dennis Thatcher!). His life was characterised by personal disaster and bizarre happenings including his marriage to his thirteen year old cousin, and a failed suicide bid. When he died it

was in a gutter, penniless and alone. But he left behind him a legacy of short stories and poems that have thrilled generations of readers and inspired film makers for over fifty years.

It was in the golden years of black and white horrors that Poe's stories were first taken to the hearts of movie-makers. Indeed it was the works of Poe that were to bring together the first two giants of horror; Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff. The first adaptation was *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932) which starred Lugosi in a very unconvincing wig. The resemblance to the original tale was vague with Lugosi as a Dr Mirakle who injects young girls with ape blood. Next came *The Black Cat* (1934) which again starred Lugosi this time as Halmar Poolzig a satanist engineer who steals the wife and daughter of Dr Vitus Werdegast played by Karloff. An inventive and weird art deco drama it still had little to do with the Poe original. They teamed up again in 1935 for *The Raven* (originally a rather naff poem by Poe.) This time Lugosi was cast as a brilliant but mad plastic surgeon with Karloff as his deformed escaped convict henchman. The film features pastiches of a number of







Poe's other works including *Lenore* and *The Pit and The Pendulum*. An oddity from this period was another adaptation of Poe's *The Black Cat* called *Mauiac* (1934.) The film flouted the recently formed Hayes censorship code and proudly boasted the eating of a cat's eye, two women fighting with a syringe and even some nudity, sadly it doesn't seem to have made it onto video!

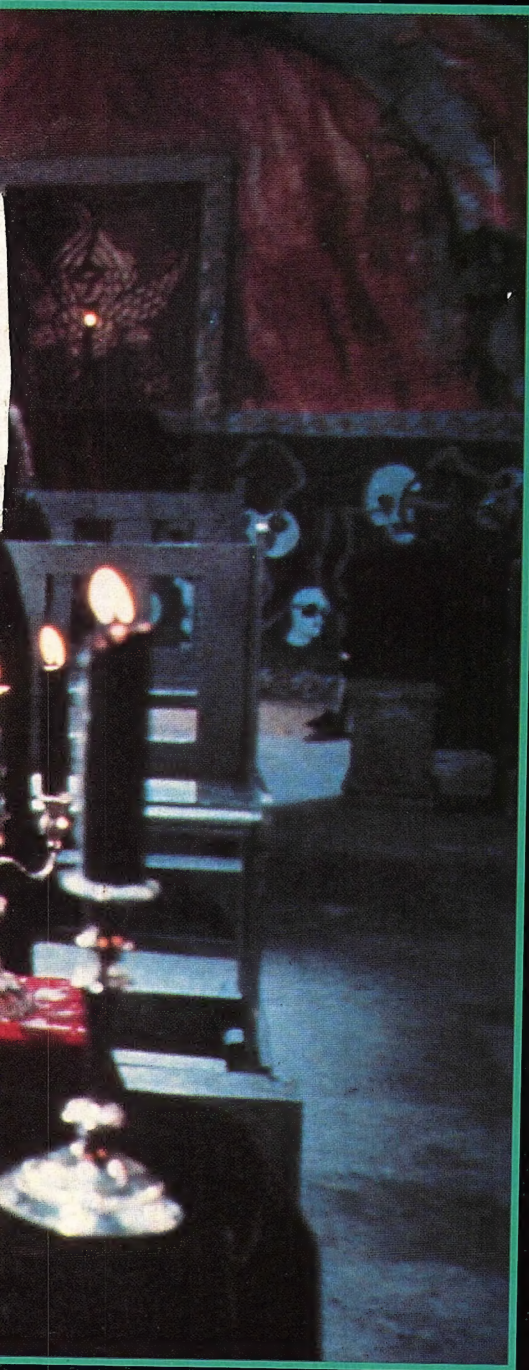
It wasn't until the fifties that Poe adaptations hit the screens again. The first was *The Phantom of the Rue Morgue* (1954) which has the honour of being the only Poe film ever made in 3 D. It stars Karl Malden, yes he of *The Streets Of San Francisco* in what is best described as a rather oily rehash of Poe's ape murder mystery, best let this one slip through your fingers! Next came the daftly titled

Manfish (1956) which was an adaptation of two of Poe's stories; *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Gold Bug*. It really amounted to little more than a limp undersea adventure and featured Lon Chaney Junior (the original wolfman) and a lot of annoying calypso music.

As we rush full pelt towards 1992 it would seem charitable to take a couple of minutes aside to mention the few Poe movies made by European friends. The French were first in on the act with an adaptation of the Poe story *The System of Dr Tarr and Professor Fether* in 1912. The story seemed to have a special appeal for foreign film-makers as it reappears in Germany as *Fünf Unheimliche Geschichten* (1931) in Poland as *Le Systeme* (1971) and in Mexico as *La Mansion de la Locura* (1973.) All are variants on the theme of

the lunatics taking over the asylum and we'd not be surprised to find you'd never heard of any of them. The Italian gore factory also produce some Poe inspired spaghetti horrors. Antonio Margeheriti made a film called *Nella Stretta Morsa Del Ragno* (1970) which featured the odd spectacle of Klaus Kinski playing Poe himself (and sounds more like a spaghetti sauce - Ed). Even cult director Lucio Fulci toned his gore laden style down a bit to a to adapt Poe's *The Black Cat* in a 1982 version which starred a suitably demented Patrick Magee and a large mangy mog.

Poe's works were to form an inspiration and make the careers of horror actor Vincent Price and exploitation director par excellence Roger Corman. The first of the Poe/Corman pictures was *The House of Usher* (1960) with Vincent Price as the

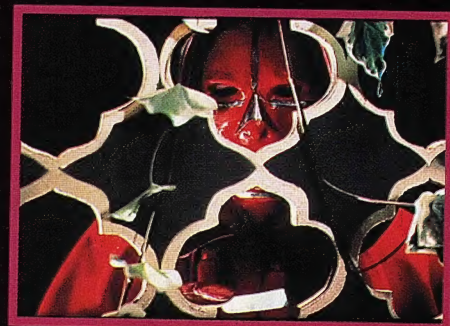


potty Rodney Usher. Dead cheap to produce, it was moody and effective and a great success. Corman went on to make *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961) in which Price thinks he's his own father and owns a large torture chamber, *The Premature Burial* (1962) featuring Ray Milland as a man who makes a custom-built coffin to avoid being buried alive, *Tales of Terror* (1962) which is three stories in one, one of which features an unforgettable drinking competition between Peter Lorre and Vincent Price. In 1963 came *The Raven* (that naff poem again) which was a bit of a departure starring Lorre, Price and Boris Karloff as warring wizards in comedy which thankfully had little to do with the original poem. *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964) is arguably the best of the series and certainly the gloomiest with Price as a

splendidly perverted Satan worshipping prince, last came *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964) which wrapped up the series with Price in wrap-around shades spouting some of his limpest dialogue ever. The combination of Price's delicious hamming and Corman's tiny budgeted cobwebby scenery are irresistible. Corman also used a Poe title for his 1963 film *The Haunted Palace* (Virgin) but it was in fact an adaptation of the H.P. Lovecraft story *The Cane of Charles Dexter Ward*. Another film to jump on the Poe bandwagon in the sixties was one of the entertaining Amicus anthology films. *The Torture Garden* (1967) featured as one of its stories a tale of two rival Poe collectors (played by Jack Palance and Peter Cushing) whose obsession leads them to a sticky end.

For two decades little more was seen of Poe on the big screen bar two films worth mentioning only in the interest of completeness; *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1971) and *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1980). It looked Poe might have disappeared from the movie world forever until just recently when another spate of Poe adaptations started to emerge. These include EV's *Buried Alive* as well as no less than two versions of *The Masque of the Red Death*. The first (released by MGM/UA) features Patrick MacNee in a costume drama which, while fairly atmospheric is a little short on scares. The second, a Castle release, features Herbert Lom in what is, unfortunately, little more than a glorified 'stalk and slash' movie (look out for our interview with Herbert in *Video World* August 1990). Also on the shelves is *The House of Usher* (Castle) which is amongst the more faithful, at least in spirit, to the Poe original. Starring Oliver Reed and Donald Pleasance it is a highly atmospheric story of madness, inbreeding and decline and worth a look for fans of moody horror. Corman has also returned to Poe adaptations, this time as a producer, in order to make *The Haunting of Morella*. It is presented as a film about witchcraft, family curses and a descent into hell and should be available over here some time in the near future.

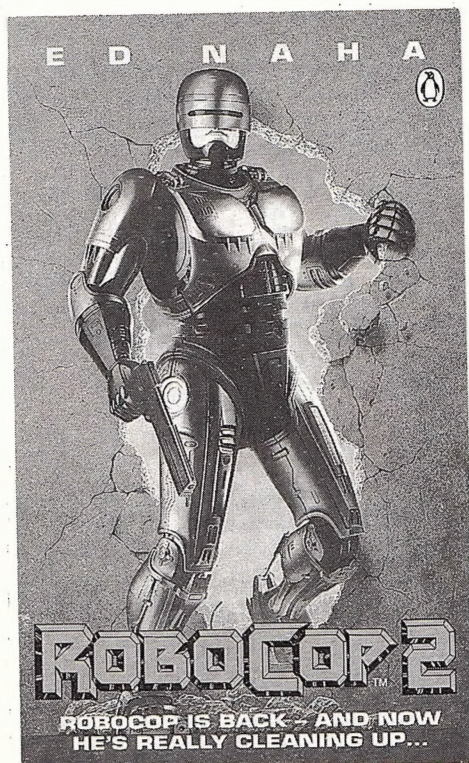
The most awaited of the current rush of Poe inspired films must be *Two Evil Eyes*. A collaboration between *Video World's* old fave, Italy's master of horror, Dario Argento and America's zombie king George Romero. It features two stories, one directed by each of them - Argento tackles *The Black Cat* in his segment, which he turns into a highly gory tale of a feline's vengeance upon a photographer. Romero, on the other hand, has rendered a version of Poe's story *The Facts in the*



Case of M. Valdemar, another gruesome story this time about desire, the afterlife and the power of hypnotism. Both of the sections are liberally scattered with references to other Poe stories from *The Pit and the Pendulum* to *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*.

Working on bringing the stories up to date with some state of the art effects is Romero's old collaborator Tom Savini who is constructing everything from zombies to mutant kittens for our delight. Looks like it could be a rough ride and you can be sure we'll be giving it a thorough once over when the time is right. Meanwhile I think it is safe to say that somewhere the ghost of Edgar Allen Poe is watching with a wry smile as his nightmarish visions continue to give people the shivers over a century after they were written.

Book Worms



ROBOCOP 2

Ed Naha, Penguin Books

The metal machine is back and he means business. This time he's up against the evil OPC corporation and their new weapon is Nuke, a drug used to control every citizen in Detroit, a city without public law and order. Robocop and his sidekick Lewis set out to take on the mighty Corporation, but they're up against a greater enemy. He's Robocop 2, a creation complete with a nuke addict's brain, who's out to kill his namesake. With characters like Dr Faxx, The Old Man and Holzgang, fans of fantasy thrillers will love this!

STAR TREK THE NEXT GENERATION - THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDERS

AC Crispin, Titan Books

Captain Picard and his crew set out to investigate the disappearance of Federation and Klingon ships on a newly opened trade route. What they find is a space ship graveyard and an Alien power source that threatens to destroy the Enterprise and her crew.

PAWNS AND SYMBOLS

Majliss Larson, Titan Books

Here we find Captain Kirk taking on the mighty Kang, a Klingon commander who has imprisoned Federation researcher Jean Czerny. The Klingons pose a greater threat however as faced with starvation they are verging on the brink of starting an intergalactic war. A battle of wills and strategy commences.

THE TEARS OF THE SINGERS

Melinda Snodgrass, Titan Books

Another Treklike tale in which Federation good guys team up with the Klingons to try and avoid a universal disaster. However, the Klingons soon revert to their usual tactics and mutineers start to make their presence felt and jeopardise the entire mission. This story features the mysterious inhabitants of Taygeta, the singers, whose valuable jewel like tears at the moment of their death are treasured. Kirk and his crew endeavour to stop the cruel hunting of these magical creatures. A very meaty ST story line.

BLOOD RIGHTS

Mike Phillips, Penguin Books

Sam Dean is a journalist turned private eye

'It's a winner, involving bent MPs, snatched heiresses, sex, drugs, double dealing ... in fact the whole shebang' - *Time Out*

Now a gripping television series



Mike Phillips BLOOD RIGHTS



PETER VIERTEL

Now a compelling film directed by and starring

CLINT EASTWOOD

WHITE HUNTER BLACK HEART

In this hard hitting tale of intrigue. Desperate for money, he's approached by his 'upwardly mobile' friend Pete, Sam agrees to investigate the mysterious disappearance of a Conservative MP's socialist student daughter. What he actually uncovers is a web of deceit, scandal, drugs and political corruption. Set in London, *Blood Rights* is an absorbing contemporary drama which, to its credit, addresses racial problems as well as being a damn good yarn.

WHITE HUNTER, BLACK HEART

Peter Viertel, Penguin Books

You won't be able to miss this one. Now a major film starring Clint Eastwood, *White Hunter Black Heart* is based on the experiences of film director John Huston during his time spent filming *The African Queen*. In the novel the director is John Wilson, a talented genius with a reputation as a womanising, drunkard and a self-destructive talent. His fascination for big game hunting turns into an obsession. This obsession compels him into great danger and he finds himself amidst scenes of death and carnage. A great read.